



BEACONS 2.0

A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR YOUNG ARTISTS

MALIYAT ANIQA NOOR

Beacons 2.0 was a unique exhibition of original Manga, graphic novels and digital illustrations by Bangladeshi artists. Organised by Icarus, a group dedicated to promoting young artists, the exhibition opened on July 24 at Drik Gallery in Dhanmondi and concluded on July 28.

Most of the work showcased in the exhibition was submitted by amateur artists, some merely in their teens. However the talent of these artists was evident in the beautiful illustrations that were on display. As Zubab Panni, one of the founders of Icarus, said "There aren't many platforms for comic book artists and Mangaka in Bangladesh. Beacons is aimed at highlighting the works of such artists and launching these art forms into the mainstream. There is so much untapped talent here. We're just trying to generate wider interest to help kick-start an industry that can tap into this talent so Bangladesh can produce more graphic novels and comics that are drawn and written by local artists."

The exhibition was inaugurated by special guests Syed Marghub Murshed, retired Secretary & Chairman, BTRC; Ahsan Habib, Chief Editor, Unmad; Masako Saito, Second Cultural Secretary, Embassy of Japan; and Mashuk Helal of Prothom Alo. After the

inauguration the guests could be seen wandering about the gallery and enjoying the artwork. A Dragon Ball Z fan, Masako Saito shared that she was very impressed with the Manga made by the Bangladeshi artists and that she hoped to see more endeavours like Beacons 2.0 in the future.

The gallery was packed during the four days Beacons 2.0 was open for. Shawana Adbiah, a 19 year old whose Manga strip "The Golden Torch" was on display, was there with her family; quite critical of her own work, she stated how Full Metal Alchemist had gotten her into Manga and how she'd spent nearly a week hunched over A4 paper, perfecting her drawings with a dipping pen to get her submission ready for the exhibition. Mashiat Lamisa and

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While Manga strips dominated the walls there were a number of digital illustrations including surrealistic renditions of deer and dragons and even a portrait of Tyrion Lannister from Game of Thrones. An entire corner of the gallery was dedicated to Naruto, an incredibly popular Manga that ended this year.

Beacons 2.0 also hosted an exclusive preview of "The Human Supernova", a graphic novel drawn and written by Navid F. Rahman. When asked about his effort Navid said, "I've had this in the works for a while now, but recently I shifted to digital media and expect to bring out a hard copy of the first chapter by the end of this year."

All in all, with the huge amount of people that showed up and the astounding quality of the artwork on display Beacons 2.0 can definitely be written of as a success.

Be sure to check out [facebook.com/Icarus.bd.page](https://www.facebook.com/Icarus.bd.page) and [facebook.com/thehumansupernova](https://www.facebook.com/thehumansupernova).

Maliyat Aniq Noor probably doesn't work here anyway. You may probably be able to reach her at noormaliyat@gmail.com



Ibtesham Labonno, aged 15 and 16 respectively, who also had their Manga on show spoke about having the plot of their strip figured out long ago but never really sitting down and drawing it. They were grateful for an initiative like Beacons because it provided them with a platform to present their brainchild to an audience. Spending about 55 hours on the pages they submitted, they described how they'd enjoyed every moment of it and how they planned on continuing the storyline of their strip.

Friends and family of the artists were not the only people present. There were anime and art enthusiasts of all ages roaming the gallery. One of the patrons, Gazi Nafi Ahmed remarked, "I'm thrilled that amateur comic book and Manga artists in Bangladesh are being